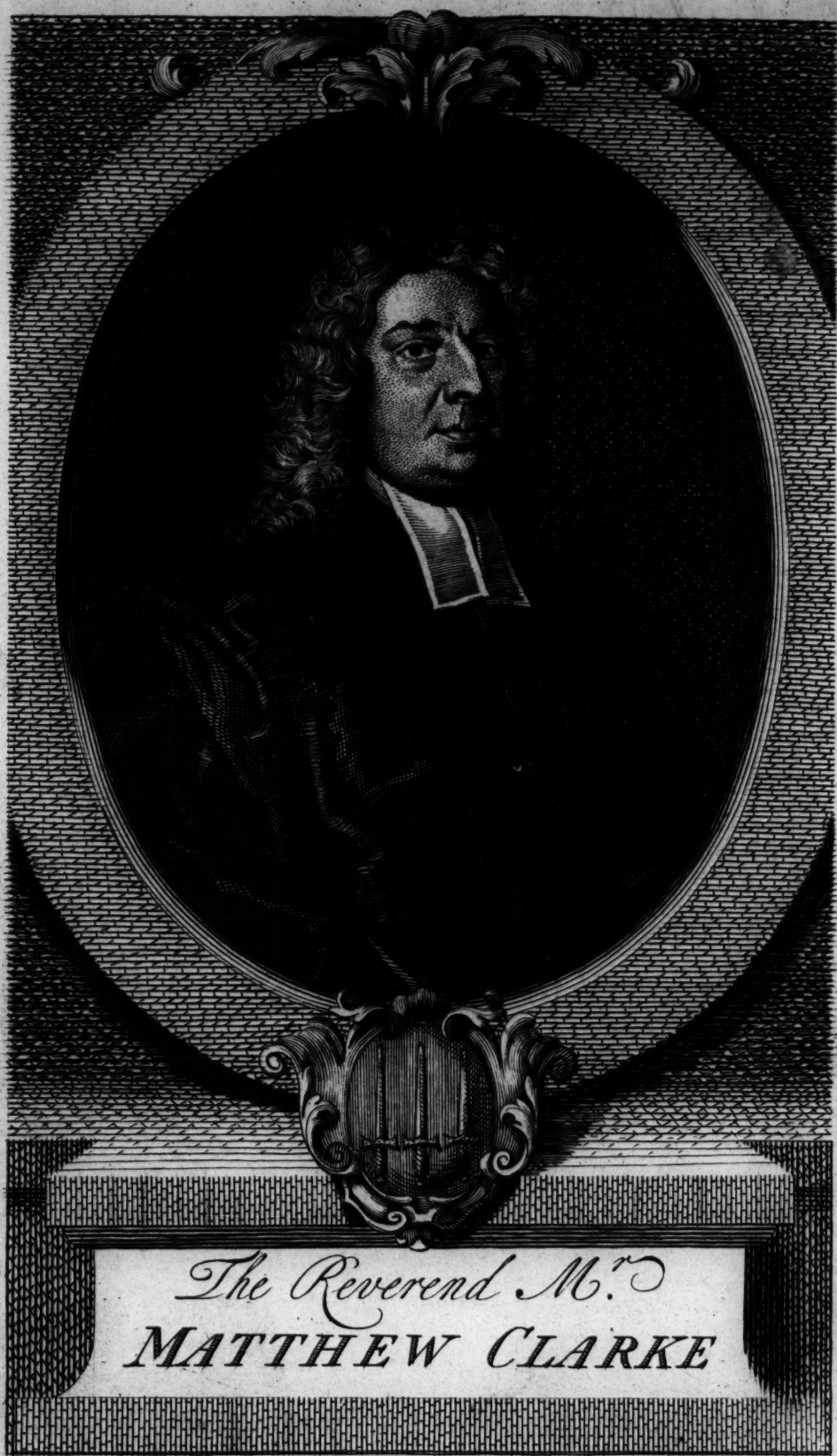




J. Pine sculp.

A
SERMON

Preach'd to the

SOCIETIES

FOR

Reformation of Manners;

AT

SALTERS-HALL.

JULY 2, 1711.

By MATTHEW CLARKE.

Published at their Request.

LONDON:

Printed for John Lawrence, at the Angel in
the Poultry, 1711.

A
SERMON

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Reformation of Manners;



SALT

BY MATTHEW CLARKE

London: Printed at the Theatre.

LONDON:

Printed for John Baskin, at the Angel in
the Strand, 1733.

A
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Preach'd to the
SOCIETIES

FOR
Reformation of Manners.

Z E C H. III. 8, 9.

*Hear now, O Joshua, the High Priest,
thou and thy Fellows that sit before thee :
for they are Men wondred at : for be-
hold, I will bring forth my Servant the
BRANCH.*

*For behold, the Stone that I have laid be-
fore Joshua : upon one Stone shall be
seven Eyes, behold I will engrave the
Graving thereof, saith the LORD of
Hosts, and I will remove the Iniquity
of that Land in one Day.*

I Doubt not but the worthy Persons,
who have so long appear'd in the
Glorious Cause of Reformation,
and for many Years been lifting up a
B Standard

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Standard against the Growing Evils of the Day; as they were at *first* convinc'd of the Necessity and Importance of such an Undertaking, are *now* more *than ever* sensible of the Difficulties which attend it, and I am afraid have found 'em greater than could once be imagin'd. Tho' you have with *much* Pains and no *small* Hazard, been striving against Sin, and gain'd considerable Advantage against the common Enemy, yet must it be own'd your Endeavours have not met with altogether the wish'd for and desir'd Success. There's but too much Cause for the Prophet's

Jer. 6. 29. Complaint, *The Bellows are burn'd, the Lead is consum'd, the Founder melteth in vain, the wicked are not plucked away. All the Iniquity of the Land is not yet remov'd. There's a great deal of Filth and Rubbish still remaining to be taken away. The Wickedness of the wicked is far from being come to an End.* * The Lusts of Men are too stubborn to be subdu'd without great Opposition, and continu'd Struggles. From all which it's evident, that how much soever has been *already* said and done, there is need *still* to animate and excite you to a diligent Perseverance in this excellent Design, and at the same time

to

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to afford you all possible Assistance and Encouragement therein, lest you be *wearied and faint in your Minds*. This I apprehend is the principal Part of the present Day's Work, and more especially aim'd at in *these Discourses*. And tho' I am very sensible you have now pitch'd upon a most improper Person for this Service, yet since you have thought fit it should be so, I shall, without any farther Apology, apply my self to the Business of the Day, and (depending upon his Help, *without whom we can do nothing*) discharge it in the best Manner I can, by opening this Passage of Scripture, *Hear now, O Joshua, the High Priest, thou and thy Fellows that sit before thee, for they are Men wonder'd at, &c.* Joshua with his Fellows, as the Prophet here tells us, were Men wondred at, for the *Warmth of their Zeal*, and the *Boldness of their Undertaking*, That in the Face of all Discouragements, they resolve to build the Holy City and the Temple; and this Vision is design'd on *purpose* to encourage them in their Work, and fortifie their Minds against all the Opposition they might expect to meet with therein. For this End they are directed to the Messiah,

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here called the Branch, in whose Strength, and under whose Influence they should be able to perform this and every other good Work. He is here represented as having *seven Eyes*, to signify the Perfection of his Wisdom; and by a *Stone* to denote the Greatness of his Strength; which Interpretation is warranted by another Prophecy, where the things here spoken of the Branch, under mystical tho' significant Types and Emblems, are said of him without a Parable in the plainest and most express Terms, and may serve for a Comment upon the Text, *And there shall come forth a Rod out of the Stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his Roots. And the Spirit of the LORD shall be upon him, the Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding, the Spirit of Counsel and Might, the Spirit of Knowledge and of the Fear of the LORD: And as this is a mighty Commendation of the Branch, so was it a great Encouragement to the Faith of his People. This Design would fail under their hands, should it be left entirely to their Management; therefore, Behold, says God, I bring forth my Servant the Branch, who shall be your Instructor and Counsellor, your Strength*
and

Isa. II.
1, 2.

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and Support, your Assistant and Comforter therein; and what he *was* to *them*, the same he *will be* to *all* that are their Companions in the like Religious Design.

The Gentlemen of this Society are not indeed their Companions in building a *material Temple*, but may be said properly enough to be employ'd in a Design of something the like Nature. Your Work is to build up the Interests of Religion, and to promote the Honour and Worship of God amongst us, so far as your Influence and Endeavours can extend. And *like them* you are Men *wondred* at by some, *despis'd*, *oppos'd*, and *contradicted* by others. But be of good Courage; Go on and build in the Strength of the Lord. Fear not the Face of Man, where you may expect the Presence of God. Be strong, O ye People of the Land, I am with you, saith the Lord, is a Promise you may as comfortably apply to your selves, as Joshua and his Fellows did, to whom it was first made. And let this stir up your Spirits, as it did theirs, to work in the House of the Lord. Hag. 2. 4. Hag. 1. 13.

The Argument to enforce this Exhortation may seem to lie out of the common Road; but I am well satis-

fied you are in no Danger of being led out of *the Way*, when for your Encouragement in this important Service you are directed to him whom God has laid as the *Foundation* and *Corner-Stone* of his Church. It might then have been said, What's a Promise of bringing forth the *Branch* to the Undertaking of *Josbua* and his Companions, in building the Temple? And the Argument with Reference to the present Design may have the same Appearance. What's a Discourse of the Messiah to the Work of Reformation? To which I answer, Much every Way. For to whom can we more properly be directed in an Undertaking which so much exceeds all *humane Strength and Wisdom*, than the *Stone* upon which are *seven Eyes*? And to whom can we so fitly look for Encouragement in our Endeavours to reform a sinful Nation, as to him, who by the Sacrifice of himself remov'd the Iniquity of his Land in one Day? So that I cannot but think there's a great *Propriety* and *Suitableness* in this Argument to the present Design, which I shall endeavour to evidence, in *opening* and *improving* the following Proposition, laid down as the Scope and Sum of the Text, *viz.*

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Obf.

In every difficult Undertaking for the Service of God and the Interests of Religion, wherein we may be wonder'd at and oppos'd by others, we must derive our Encouragements from him who by one Offering has taken away the Iniquity of his People; and is endued with perfect Wisdom and Strength, for the enabling others as Instruments, to promote the same blessed Design.

This is not the first Time the Church of God had been relieved by a Promise of the Messiah's *Incarnation* and *Sacrifice*, tho' some hundreds of Years before his actual Appearance in the World. See *Isa. 7. 14. Hag. 2. 4, 5, 6, 7.* By which we learn, That Christ was and is the Substance of the Churches Comfort and Support in every Age; he furnishes his People with *Wisdom*, fills them with *Grace*, and blesses them with *Success* in every difficult Duty. *Seven Eyes* are here said to be upon one Stone, i. e. say some, The Eyes of all the *Patriarchs* and *Prophets*, the *Evangelists* and *Apostles*, and of the *Faithful* in all Times, were lifted up unto and intently fixed on the Messiah. In him they placed their Trust and Confidence; from him they deriv'd their Supplies, and expected all their

B 4

Success.

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Success. Now were the Fathers of old comforted in the Faith and Hope of the Messiah to come? Did they look unto him afar off, and were they lightned by that distant View, and shall not *our Eyes* much more be lifted up unto the same Jesus, *already* come into the World, for Light and Life, Wisdom, Strength and Success in every Religious Undertaking? The better to obtain this End, I shall here shew,

I. I. That we may be *call'd unto and engag'd in a Work for the Service of God, and the Interests of Religion, attended with many Difficulties in itself, and much oppos'd by others.*

II. II. Whenever we are so, our Eyes must be up unto, and our Encouragements derived from Christ, the Head and Foundation of his Church. And having gone through these two Heads, I shall close the whole with a suitable Application. To begin with the first, *viz.*

I. I. We may be *call'd unto and engaged in a Work for God, of great Difficulty in itself, and much oppos'd by others.* So were Joshua and his Companions in their Day.

The Building of the Temple was,

I. A

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1. A Work of great Difficulty in it self, especially considering the Circumstances they were then under. Their Condition at *that* Time was upon many Accounts very deplorable; they were lately come out of a long Captivity, and were still under the Power of those that once held them Captives. The holy Seed was miserably trampled on and abus'd. The Marks of Poverty and Disgrace were still visible upon them, tho' the Yoke of Captivity was taken off their Necks. How then shou'd this poor despised People be able to raise such a Building as the Temple out of its Ruins? What Heart cou'd they have to *begin* it? What Hopes cou'd they have to *finish* it? It was upon many Accounts so unlikely, that others wonder'd at 'em for attempting it; which leads us further to observe, it was,

2. A Work greatly oppos'd by others. 2.
There was an open Door to build, and there were many Adversaries.

Satan endeavour'd to provoke God against 'em, and make him their Enemy. He stood at the Right Hand of Zech. 3. 1. Joshua to resist them.

His Instruments hung upon the Wheels, and made them drive heavily on. The Ezra 4. People 4. 5. 7.

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People of the Land weaken'd the Hands of the People of Judah, and they troubled them in Building : They bir'd Counsellors against 'em to frustrate their Purpose, and wrote Letters against 'em to Artaxerxes, accusing them of Sedition and Rebellion, and mov'd for an Order to stop Proceedings, whereby the Work ceas'd for a Time.

It's easie to observe how applicable this is in *several* Instances at least to the present Case ; and I believe you could run the Parallel in your own Thoughts, as I have gone along. Like theirs, yours is,

1. *A Work of great Difficulty.* That it is for the Service of God, and really design'd to promote the *valuable* Interests of Religion, I have no doubt ; and that it's exceeding difficult and hazardous I believe you are very sensible. The many *Years* Experience you have had gives but too convincing a Proof of this. The Reforming the lewd Practices of a licentious Age ; and cleansing a polluted Land from its abominable Filth and Impurities, is indeed an *Herculean* Labour. It is no easie thing to cast out the strong Man armed, who has so long enjoy'd an undisturb'd Possession. Evil and inveterate

inveterate Customs are not soon broken. They that have many Years enjoy'd an uncontroul'd Liberty, and sh'd by Prescription, won't easily be prevail'd with to alter their Course. It's hard to revive a *long* neglected Work, and lay effectual Restraints upon the Lusts of Men so much us'd to domineer. To this we may add, yours is,

2. *A Work much oppos'd by others.* To say the *least*, like Joshua and his Companions.

1. *You are Men wondred at.* The worldly, prophane, unbelieving, ignorant Sort of Jews wondred at *them* and *their Hopes*; That they would attempt a Work of *so much Labour* and *Expence*. In like manner, those that are themselves cold and lukewarm, wonder at your Zeal and Forwardness; the fearful and unbelieving, at your Courage and Resolution; narrow selfish Spirits, who care not what becomes of the Interests of God's Church, if their *own* are secur'd, wonder at your Piety and Self-denial. Those that are weary, and draw back, at your Constancy and Perseverance. Such as are *hardned* in Sin, and *resolv'd* upon their Way, wonder at your Insolence, as they call it, that you dare

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dare stop their Carreer, and will not let them alone to take their Course, tho' it be to *affront* their God, and *undo* themselves. In a Word, many wonder you will give your selves so much Trouble, encounter such Difficulties, run such Hazards, put your selves and others to so much Expence, that you will venture the Loss of Livelihood, and even Life it self, and thus expose yourselves to be ruin'd and undone, if not murther'd— They wonder you will attempt to reform a Generation of Men that seem past Cure, and whom you can have so little Hopes of reclaiming.

But in reality the Wonder may rather be turn'd upon themselves, That they can so tamely observe the vile Affronts offer'd every Day to the Majesty of Heaven, and behold Men in Drovers running headlong to Destruction, and do nothing, or next to nothing to prevent their Ruin. It's Matter of Astonishment they can be content to sit still, and see the Virtue of the Nation lost, without endeavouring to recover it, and should be so unconcern'd to prevent those Judgments which we may justly fear our provoking Crimes are pulling down upon our Heads :
 God

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God himself observ'd this with Wonder, *I saw that there was no Man, and wondred there was no Intercessour.* Isa. 59. 16.

But to return ; you are like them,

2. Men despised and insulted. If some wondred at Joshua and his Companions, for the Boldness of their Undertaking, others laugh'd at them for the Weakness of their Efforts. When building the Wall, we are told, Sanballat and Tobiah laugh'd them to scorn, and despised them, saying, *What do these feeble Jews? Will they fortifie themselves? Will they sacrifice in one Day? If they begin, will they be able to finish? That which they build, if a Fox go up, he shall even break it down.* Neh. 4. 1, 2, 3.

And are there none by whom you are insulted in such scornful Language? What will these godly Reformers do, who pretend to so much more Virtue than their Neighbours? Do they think to reform the Nation? If they begin, will they be able to finish? What will these feeble Men do? Hear V. 4.
O our God for we are despised, and turn their Reproach upon their own Head—
But neither is this all, you are Men,

3. Slander'd, censur'd and condemn'd. The Enemies of the Jews laugh't'em to scorn, but it was a fictitious Laughter ; for

for the Attempt they pretended to *defy*, fill'd 'em with *Rage*, and they really *fear'd* what they *seem'd* to *despise*. They
 Neh. 4. 1. *were wroth, took great Indignation against 'em, and sought to hinder the Work*; which they did by Threats and Menaces, fly Insinuations and malicious Charges, exhibited against them to their Superiours. Should this be your Lot, marvel not at the Matter. They that blaspheme your God, won't spare to revile his *Instruments*: But smite with the *Tongue of Slander*, as they do with the *Fist of Wickedness*.

Jer. 18.

18.

Ila. 50. 4.

Expect that Satan will go forth, and be a *lying, slander*ing Spirit in the Mouths of his Emissaries against God's faithful Servants; *these* will condemn you as the *Troublers of our Israel*, tho' you are the *Chariots and Horsemen thereof*, and represent your Design as prejudicial, if not dangerous, to the *Church and State*, tho' nothing more tends to the *Safety and Honour* of both. Your Zeal by these will be reckon'd only the Effect of some *personal Quarrel*; and the World bear in hand that an hypocritical Affectation of Esteem makes you more forward than *others are*, and busier than *you need to be*. In short, by these your Aims shall be misjudg'd,

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judg'd, and your Methods censur'd ;
your selves lie under the Imputation
of Rashness and Indiscretion, and
which is worse, Unfaithfulness and
Self-seeking. These things will they
do to make you odious to the People,
and, if possible, obnoxious to the Ma-
gistrate.

4. You are Men betrayed by others.

Some pretended to *build with the Jews*,
that being mingled with 'em in the
Work, they might have the fairer
Opportunity to hinder it: *Let us build,*

Ezra 4. 2.

say they, *with you, for we seek your God*
as you do ; and we do Sacrifice unto him ;

but this was false: They said they
were *Jews*, but *were not*, but *were found*

Liars. In like manner, some have u-
surp'd the Name of Reformers, and

pretended to be of your Society ; they
say to others at least, we are Refor-

mers, and engag'd in the same holy
Design, tho' they are not, but do lie.

Their Aim is only to get Money for
themselves, and bring an Odium up-

on you. Hence come many of those
little Stories, which are *rais'd* and

spread, and too easily *believ'd* to your
Disadvantage ; for *Report*, say some,

and we will Report. It's to be fear'd,

5. You

5. *You are Men deserted and forsaken by others. I wish there are none that having once put their Hand to this Plough, have look'd back, being fearful of the Mischief that may come upon themselves, and unbelieving as to any Good that's like to be done upon others. Judah said, The Strength of the Bearers of Burdens is decay'd, we are not able to build the Wall. And are there none ready to say, The Work is too hard, the Service too hot, we are not able to proceed; the Distemper is too prevailing ever to be cur'd, by any Remedies we can apply: Let no Man therefore strive nor reprove another. It's to no Purpose to think of reclaiming Men so hardned and obstinate in Sin. They say, Let us alone that we may serve our Lusts; then e'en let them alone. If they will ruin themselves who can help it? That which dies let it die, that which is to be cut off let it be cut off. They don't desire, nay they refuse, they hate to be reform'd: The very applying the Remedy exasperates the Patient, instead of healing the Distemper. If you endeavour to stop them in their Course, they quarrel with you for your Pains; then give up the Cause as *Elijah* did, not from want of*
- Neh. 4.
10.
- Hos. 4. 4.
- Zech. 11.
9.

Zeal for Reformation, but because *there's so little Prospect of Success*. Retire into your Cell ; Mourn for what you can't mend, and cry, Lord have Mercy on us. But be assur'd, these Pretences of Improbability of doing *good to others*, and Likelihood of doing *Mischief to our selves*, are nothing but the Sprouts of *cursed Unbelief*, highly dishonourable to God and the Promises of his Word. If others therefore should draw back, thro' Cowardise and Indifference, let not this break your Ranks and make you run from your Colours.

6. Lastly, You are reflected on by some for want of Success. After all the Noise and Bustle made in the Town, by the *Reformers*, what Progress, say they, is made in the *Work of Reformation*? The City, the Nation, is as wicked as ever. Are not Oaths and Curses, Is not Drunkenness and Uncleaness, as common as ever? Or is the Sabbath more religiously observed than heretofore? Thus you are *grieved and wounded* in the House of your Friends. But Good Men *may* be mistaken, and I hope *are so* in this Case ; There may be more Good done than they are aware of : Tho' suppose it were
C otherwise ;

otherwise; the more Cause there is for this Complaint, the more you are to be *pitied* and *pray'd* for. The Want of Success is your own *Trouble*, and therefore should not be objected against you by others to your *Reproach*. If the Work does go slowly on, the greater Need there is of more Hands, and that those you have should double their Diligence.

To conclude this Head, whatever *others* think, the God of this World knows, that every *Blow* you give to Sin is a *Stroke* at his Kingdom, and therefore raises the whole *Posse* of Hell to oppose you. The Powers of Darkness will be up in Arms, and set themselves in array against you; those that *hate* to be reform'd, will with one Mouth *cry down* the Reformers. The Swearers, Drunkards, and Sabbath-breakers, will take the Alarm, and curse the Reformation. They that

Amos 5.
10. are impatient of all Restraint *will hate him that reproves in the Gate, and abhor him that speaks uprightly*. And which is very *shocking*, some of those very Persons, who by their Office are set in Defence of the Gospel, and oblig'd to afford you what Countenance and Assistance they can, weaken your Hands,

Hands, traduce your honest Endeavours, and represent you to the World as a *Company of Refined Hypocrites, who under a sanctified Pretence of greater Zeal and Purity, turn the World upside down. Oh Tempora, Oh Mores !* What an Age are we fallen into ? And where will things end ?

But tho' you should meet with *this* and *much more*, be not offended. If the Temple be built, and God's Work goes forward, *Satan* will rage, and the *Gates of Hell* set themselves against it : But *fear ye not the Reproach of Men*, Isa. 51. *neither be afraid of their reviling, the 7, 8. Moth shall eat them up as a Garment.* Relieve your selves, my Brethren, against all this Opposition, by considering him in whom all your Strength lies, and from whom all your Help must come, which leads us to the second General.

II. Gen. *When we are call'd to this difficult Service, our Eyes must be up unto, and our Encouragements deriv'd from Christ, the Head and Foundation of his Church.*

II.

Various *Topicks* have been insisted on, and different *Arguments* made use

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of upon this Occasion; all which are of Use in *themselves*, and I question not have been urg'd with good Success *amongst you*. But I humbly think it may be said of this as of *Goliath's Sword*, *There's none like it*. There can be no better Weapon, were there but a more skilful Hand to use it. And I freely own it's a Subject I have a peculiar Pleasure in, and therefore even upon this Occasion, shall farther evidence the Suitableness of it to the present Design, by shewing,

- I. First, *What we are to look for and expect from Christ in this Undertaking.*
And,
 - II. Secondly, *What Encouragement we have to do so.*
- I. I am to shew what we are to look for and expect from Christ the BRANCH.
 - I. Wisdom and Conduct, that the Work may be managed in the best and most becoming Way. Here, if any where, the Dove's Simplicity shou'd be temper'd with the Serpent's Wisdom. You had need have your Eyes in your Head, as the wise Man has. There are many Observers that watch for your halting, and would rejoice in your Fall. So
that

that one great thing requir'd, and indeed an eminent Degree of it, is Wisdom and Prudence, that you may not by any rash and unadvised Steps, give them Occasion who seek it, to reproach the *Design it self*, and condemn the Persons that manage it. *But they that are of the contrary Part may be rather ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.*

2. *Strength and Assistance sufficient for the Day, and the Work of it.* You must expect the Contradiction of Sinners, and all that Malice set on fire of Hell can do to oppose you. You row against Wind and Tide; and wrestle not only with Flesh and Blood, but Principalities and Powers, against spiritual Wickedness in high Places. Lest therefore your Hands hang down, and your Knees grow feeble, look unto Jesus, who endur'd the greatest Contradiction of Sinners against himself; and tho' he resisted unto Blood, set his Face like a Flint, that you may be arm'd with the same Mind, and steel'd with a like Courage and Resolution, tho' you can't expect it in an equal Degree.

3. *Success in your Undertaking.* By his Assistance and Blessing, you will be Men of Wonder, in the Sense some give of the Words in the Text, i.e. Men

for whom God does Wonders, by enabling you to do Wonders for God. But without this, your Labour will be in vain, your Time and Strength spent, your Peace and Lives expos'd for nought. The Sins of Men may be restrain'd by the coercive Force of Human Laws ; but the Hearts of Men can only be chang'd by the superiour Power of Divine Grace. You may be the happy Instruments of preventing the outward Acts of Sin, and bind Men in the Chains of the Law, that they mayn't range about like savage Creatures, to do Mischief where-ever they come ; but it's God alone can change their Natures, and turn the Beast into the Man. And I can't but say with some Freedom, in which you will bear with me, there can be no mighty Expectation from any Attempts of this Nature, if Christ, the Power and Necessity of his Grace, be overlook'd ; and Men don't see themselves concern'd above all things to interest HIM in the Affair ; Since he has assur'd us, the great Changes to be made in the World, shall be brought about, not so much by Human Might and Power, as by his own Spirit.

Zech. 4. 6.

II. I come in the second Place to shew what Encouragement we have to expect *these Supplies and this Success* from Christ. And,

II.

1. *His being endued with perfect Wisdom and Knowledge, gives us Encouragement to expect Counsel and Direction from him.* It would argue too fond an Opinion of your own Abilities, to think you wanted no more Wisdom than you are naturally furnish'd with to manage a Work of so much Niceness and Difficulty. Now if any Man *lack Wisdom*, as what Man does not? let him *ask it of God*, the *Fountain of Wisdom*, let him *receive it from Christ*, in whom are hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge.

2. *His being invested with all Power and Authority gives us Encouragement to depend upon him for Strength and Success.* When he sent forth his Disciples to set up his Kingdom in the World, a Work of great Difficulty, and in which they were sure to meet with the utmost Opposition, he prefaces their Commission with an Account of his own Authority, and assures them for their Encouragement, *That* Mat. 28. *all Power in Heaven and Earth was gi-* 18. *ven into his Hands.* All Power to

subdue his Enemies, and uphold his People. To succeed their Religious Enterprizes, and defeat the others malicious Designs. Let this then encourage your Dependance; He whom you serve is well able to support you under the Weight of your Charge, and fortifie your Minds against all the Opposition of your Enemies: And what he is able to do, he certainly will do, for faithful is he that has promis'd.

3. The Efficacy of his Sacrifice, which in one Day remov'd the Iniquity of his Land, is our great Encouragement when endeavouring to reform a sinful People. *We all, says the Prophet, like Sheep are gone astray, and are turned every one to his own Ways, and the Lord laid on him the Iniquity of us all. He bore our Sins in his own Body on the Tree, and by bearing them himself, remov'd 'em from us. Witness was born to this by John the Baptist, in those Words, Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the Sins of the World; and this he did in one Day, that blessed Day of Atonement wherein he offer'd himself once for all to God, and by that one Offering for ever perfected them that are sanctified. That which was not, could not be done in many Days, in many*

Isa. 53. 6.

John 1.
29.

Hebr. 10.
14.

ny Years, by those innumerable Sacrifices offer'd under the Law ; the Son of God perfected by *one* Offering, in *one* Day : such Strength there was in the *Man of God's Right Hand* ; it was but *one* Day's Work with him to remove the Iniquity of his Land.

Now from this Consideration, it's most natural that our Eyes should be directed to the BRANCH, when we are endeavouring to remove the Iniquity of the Land.

It's certainly the greatest *Kindness* you can do this Nation ; as it's the *greatest Mercy* God can vouchsafe a People to take away their Iniquity : And if there be a Blessing yet in Store for this poor Land, *God will turn again, and have Compassion on us, subdue our Iniquities, and cast our Sins into the Depth of the Seas.* Mic. 7.
19.

The only Means of removing Iniquity in a Way of Atonement and Satisfaction, is the Sacrifice of Christ. In this *you* had no Hand, for in this *he* had no Partner.

But as Instruments in the Hand of God you may be said to remove the Iniquity of the Land, by your Endeavours to *Reform* it. Now this has been the Work of many Days, of several
Years

Years with you, and tho' not without some very considerable Success, you are far from having accomplish'd a thorough Reformation. Many still hate to be reform'd themselves, and hate those that attempt to reform them. The Nation, the City, seems over-run with Vice and Prophaneness. The most putid Oaths and the vilest Execrations are daily heard in our Streets. *Young* ones have-learnt, and *old* ones ha'nt forgot to prophane the sacred and awful Name of God. He is oftner in some Mens *Mouths* than their *Thoughts*, and such Wretches there are, who send to Heaven more *Wishes* to be *damned*, than they ever put up Prayers to be *saved*. Oaths and Curses are as common with some as *Words*; Intemperance and Excess, as *Eating* and *Drinking*. Many drink and swear, forget the Law, and hate him that reproves in the Gate.

A very melancholy Reflection! Against which, however, relieve yourselves with this Consideration; What you have not been able to effect in *many* Years, the Branch can accomplish in *one* Day. But *who hath heard such a Thing? Who hath seen such things? Shall the Earth be made to bring forth in*

Isa. 66.
8, 9.

one

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one Day? Or shall a Nation be born at once? Yes! if God will set his Hand to the Work. For shall he bring to the Birth, and not give Strength to bring forth? Shall he cause to bring forth, and shut the Womb? Is any thing too hard for him who remov'd the Iniquity of his Land in one Day? Are not the Hearts of all Men in his Hand to turn 'em as he pleases? and can't he as easily make them cease to do evil, and learn to do well, as command 'em to do it? He that made a full Atonement by the Vertue of his Sacrifice, can soon work a thorough Reformation by the Efficacy of his Spirit. He can so purge the Land that there shall be no Iniquity, no *NEQUAM*, or not such Numbers however, of those *lewd, graceless, worthless* Wretches, who in so daring a manner *insult their God*, and defy his *Laws*. He is able to write in the fullest Characters, *HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD*, upon all Ranks and Degrees of Men; and make it visible in the common Actions and ordinary Employments of Life, according to that glorious Prophecy, *In that Day, saith the Lord of Hosts, HOLINESS TO THE LORD shall be upon the Bells of the Horses; and the Pots in the Lords House shall be like the Bowls*

Zech. 14.
20, 21.

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Bowls before the Altar : Tea every Pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be Holiness to the Lord ; and in that Day shall there be no more a Canaanite in the House of the Lord : Which blessed Day the Lord hasten in his Time.

I now proceed to the

APPLICATION ;

Wherein I shall address my self, first to the Gentlemen of this Society, and then to others.

I. To those already engag'd in this honourable Warfare ; and what I propound to my self herein, is both to encourage and direct you.

I. To animate and encourage you to persevere in this excellent Design. Yours is no Society form'd for any Temporal Advantages the Members thereof expect to reap by it to themselves ; but I perswade my self a compassionate Concern for your dear Country, a warm Zeal for the Honour of our God, and a sincere Desire to promote the valuable Interests of Religion, are the Springs which first gave Rise to this noble Undertaking, and the generous Principles by which you are acted in it. Then happy Britain! happy London!

don! That in thee are found some who seek thy Good, and would prevent thy Ruin: That there are some to stand in the Gap, and make up those Breaches, at which we might otherwise justly fear our Mercies would go out, and God's Judgments come in. How ill so ever things are with us, our Case is not yet so bad as theirs, of whom God complain'd, *I sought for a Man that should make up the Hedge, and stand in the Gap before me for the Land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none.* It's some Comfort, that among the vast Crouds of licentious and incorrigible Sinners, some few at least are zealous for the Observation of those Laws, which others are so forward to break, and dare to reform those that dare to offend. Blessed be God some there are that do agree in this, how much soever they differ in other things; and tho' of different Communions, for the Worship of God, are of one Society for the Reformation of Manners. Some there are whose Souls, like that of righteous Lot, are vex'd from Day to Day with the filthy Conversation of the wicked. And in whom some thing of that excellent Spirit prevails, which the Royal Psalmist express'd in those Words,

Ezek. 22.

30.

2 Pet. 2.

7, 8.

Pfal. 119.
136.

Words, Rivers of Waters run down mine Eyes; because Men keep not thy Laws. With him they behold Transgressors and are griev'd at the Dishonour done to God, and the Miseries Men daily bring upon themselves. When St. Paul beheld the City of Athens so universally given to Superstition and Idolatry, his Spirit was stir'd within him at so sad a Sight: In like manner, some Holy Souls are sensibly touch'd to see the whole City, the whole Land, given to all manner of Wickedness and Impiety. These have been jealous for the Lord of Hosts, and resolv'd as they are able to plead his Cause against Vice and Profaneness, being sensible *this* Filth and Dirt must be swept away by the Work of Reformation, or we are like to be swept away with the Besome of Destruction. This (for your Encouragement) takes away National Guilt, and we may hope will prevent National Judgments.

Had there been *ten* righteous Persons in Sodom, it had been preserv'd from Ruin for their Sakes. Had there been a Society in Jerusalem, like that in London, we have Reason to conclude, those desolating Judgments, which

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unrestrain'd Vice brought upon the City, had been prevented. For thus says God by the Prophet, *Run ye to Jer. 5. 1. and fro thro' the Streets of Jerusalem, see now and know, seek in the broad Places thereof, if you can find a Man, if there be any one that executeth Judgment, that seeketh Truth, and I will pardon it.* How low did God condescend in the Case? If you can find a *Man*, a single Person, a few that have a Zeal for God, and are active for Reformation, I'll spare the Land for their Sakes. How much more may a considerable Number of zealous and faithful Reformers prevail to turn away Wrath from the Land?

However, (for your further Encouragement) you'll have this Satisfaction, that you have done your Duty, discharg'd your Consciences, and deliver'd your own Souls. The *Mourners*, and much more the *Reformers* in *Jerusalem*, had a Mark set upon them for *Preservation*, when the *Rebels* were mark'd out for *Destruction*, Ezek. 9. 4.

And as a further Encouragement, tho' you should fail of *Success*, you shall not lose your *Reward*. If the Lord hearkned and heard, and a Book of Remembrance was written to record

cord the godly Speeches of those that fear'd the Lord in an evil Day, and thought upon his Name, how much more will the many good Deeds done by you to this Nation, be recorded to your immortal Honour?

Go on, therefore, my Brethren, to remove the Iniquity of the Land by Reforming it. It's but a little while this Struggle will last. Time and Opportunity for Service will soon be over. Work, therefore, while it is Day, and what your Hands find to be done, do it with all your Might. Be not weary of this good Work; You have run well, let nothing abate your Zeal, or hinder your Progress. *Lay aside every Weight and run with Patience the Race set before you. Confer not with Flesh and Blood.* Bring no such dangerous Enemies to the Council-Board. Go on in the Strength of the Lord; and do Good to Mens Souls and Bodies, tho' against their Wills, and you may have from *them* but little Thanks for your Pains. You have God on your Side, the Promises of his Word for your Support; the Prayers of his People for your Success. You have, in a Word, the faithful, merciful, and almighty Jesus

for your Strength and Conduct. And this brings us,

2. *To direct and counsel you.*

1. *Fix your Eyes upon, and expect all your Supplies from Christ the Branch.*

Never leave him out of your Work, from whom all your Encouragements in it are to be deriv'd. What Arguments may not the considering him who endur'd the greatest Contradiction of Sinners, furnish you with for Patience and Constancy, in striving against Sin? And how fitly will this serve to store your Minds with the tenderest Compassion to the Souls of Men, whilst the warmest Zeal is express'd against their provoking Crimes?

2. *Look well to your selves.* When casting the Beam out of others Eyes, if possible leave not a Mote in your own. Evidence your Uprightness by keeping your selves from your own Iniquity, whilst you are endeavouring to remove it from the Land; and be careful to set good Examples, as you are concern'd to suppress bad ones, that your Zeal may not be contradicted by your Practice.

3. *Give God the Glory of all your Success.* Tho' your Endeavours, it must be own'd, are far from having all the Success a good Man would wish, yet I'm

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perswaded they have much more than some do imagine. The Land, we may hope, by your Means, has been eas'd in some measure of that Load of Guilt it once groan'd under the Burden of. Many have been *reclaim'd*, or at least *restrain'd*; not a few *Persons and Families sav'd from Ruin and Destruction*. Some *Sins* driven into Corners, which would otherwise, by this Time, have appear'd with an open Face, and been committed far more than they now are in the Sight of the Sun. If then you have gone thro' any Service for God, and gain'd any Success in your Work, *assume* not the Glory of it to your selves, but *ascribe* it wholly to God; *Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy Name give the Glory*, is the Strain in which all our Songs of Praise should run.

Tho' you have done more than *others*, yet not more than *was your Duty*; and when you have done all, must acknowledge you are but unprofitable Servants.

I proceed in the Conclusion,

2 Exh. *To invite and perswade others to set their Hand to this good Work*. Those that are themselves doing the Lord's Work, call out for your Assistance, or rather God himself, by them, makes this Proclama-

Ex. 3. 26. tion; *Who is on my side, who? Who will*
 Psal. 94. *rise up for me against the evil Doers? Or,*
 19. *Who*

Who will stand up for me against the Workers of Iniquity? And will not you take Part with God against Transgressors, and heartily join with them who desire and endeavour to reform the Land? Can you stand under the Weight of that Charge, now, or in the Great Day? *You have not gone up into the Gaps, nor* Ezek. 13. *made up the Hedge for the House of Israel.* 5. Won't you then join Heart and Hand in this excellent and useful Undertaking? Was there ever more Need to do it? How many Years had our Land lain neglected, and like a Field untill'd, overgrown with Briars and Thorns, which all the Pains of others have hitherto been too little to root up? Is it not a Land hardly to be match'd for Impiety, considering the Advantages we enjoy, and the Engagements we are under to Holiness? What Improvements are daily made in the curfed Art and Trade of Sin? The most positive and exprefs Commands of God are notoriously violated: The most condescending Acts of Divine Goodness in the Gift of Christ, and the Revelation of the Gospel, trampled upon with the profaneft Scorn and Contempt, and the most engaging Appearances of Providence in our Favour, no otherwise improv'd by many, than

as if we were deliver'd to commit all manner of Abominations. And this Disease, in a word, is become epidemical, having infected all Ranks and Degrees of
 Jer. 5.4,5. Men ! *I said, Surely these are poor and foolish, they know not the Way of the Lord, nor understand the Judgment of their God. I'll get me to the great Men, and speak to them : To the Nobles and the Priests, who have had a higher Birth and better Education !*

But is it any better with these ? Alas, no ! they are more refractory and obstinate than the former ; so that no Laws can bind 'em. : *For these have altogether broke the Yoke, and burst the Bands asunder.*

The Apostle's Complaint too well befits our Day : *There are many walk, of whom I have often told you, and now tell you weeping, they are Enemies to the Cross of Christ.* It's not only here and there one, that walks after this manner, but great Numbers of all Sorts and Ranks, many of all Perswasions and Characters : And this is not only a *single Act* of Wickedness, committed now and then thro' Surprise and the Strength of Temptation ; but it's their *constant Course, and daily Practice.* *I have, says the Apostle, often told you of them, and now tell you weeping ; he cou'd not speak it without Tears in his Eyes ;*

Phil 3.
18, 19.

Eyes ; it was the Grief of his Soul, and wounded him at the very Heart. *They are Enemies to the Cross of Christ, a Scandal to that holy Name by which they are call'd. Their God is their Belly, they glory in their Shame, and without preventing Mercy their End will be Destruction.*

These Things are not spoken as a Satyr upon Mankind, and to expose the Nakedness of the Land. I do not, God, I trust, knows, I do not say this to aggravate Matters, and exasperate the Spirits of Men, too much embitter'd already, but as one really affected with the *Evils complain'd of*, and would rejoice in nothing more than the seeing them remov'd.

Are then these things so? and that they are who can deny? *Do Men thus make void the Law?* and is it not then *Time to work?* High Time for *us* to work for God, and God to work for *us*; That Vertue may yet be upheld in some Reputation amongst us, and all *Morality* mayn't be lost, where Christianity is profess'd.

Psal. 119.
126.

Oh then that you would come to the Help of the Lord ; come in unto the Help of his People, against the mighty ; The mighty Sins and Sinners of the Day. Help them by your Countenance and Approbation,

tion, in a Work so much decry'd and run down. Help them by your *Substance* and *Estates*, in a Work of so much *Charge* and *Expenſe*; further the Work by your fervent *Prayers*, and let your Hands be lifted up while the Dispute laſts, as thoſe of *Moses* were in the Mount, whiſt *Joſhua* was contending with *Amalek* in the *Valley*. Let it be your daily Request; Favour, Lord, this righteous Cause; *Eſtabliſh thou the Work of their Hands*; *the Work of their Hands eſtabliſh thou it*. Wou'd many be perſwaded to join heartily in this *laudable* Deſign, who knows how far the Reformation might yet be carry'd; and what Bleſſings the Nation might reap thereby? Then be not *afraid*, be not *aſham'd* to engage in the deſpis'd and oppoſed Cause of Reformation. Say not, It's in vain to attempt it; We deſpair of ever ſeeing any great Matters done by it: How can we expect to ſucceed, conſidering the Circumſtances we are under?

Many are grown ſo daring, they deſy all Attempts to reclaim 'em. Some who are oblig'd by their *Office* to ſuppreſs Vice and Prophaneneſs, give it too much Countenance by their *Practice*; and either won't at all, or with a very ill Grace, puniſh the Crimes in *others* which they

they frequently commit *themselves*.

Many live at ease, and, *Gallio* like, care for none of these things. Some that wish well to the Land, and would gladly see it reform'd, won't touch the Work with one of their Fingers. Men are divided in their Opinions concerning the Work itself, and as some doubt whether it be *Practicable*, others question whether it be *Justifiable*, and are ready to blame those that engage in it. These things, it must be own'd, are very *shocking*, and can't but occasion many Thoughts of Heart, as the Divisions of *Reuben* did.

But be not fearful nor faint-hearted. Let God find you in the Exercise of your Duty, whatever Discouragements you meet with in the Way; and be assur'd for your Comfort, the Time will come, when he himself will take the Work into his own Hand, and effectually lift up a Standard against that Flood which now seems to bear down all before it: For so has he assur'd us by his Prophet, *Men* ^{Isa. 32.} *shall be careless and at Ease, upon the Land* ^{13, 15.} *of my People shall come Briars and Thorns, UNTIL the Spirit be poured upon us from on high. THEN Judgment shall dwell in the Wilderness, and Righteousness remain in the fruitful Field. The Work of Righteousness shall be Peace, and the Effect of Righteous-*
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ness shall be Quietness and Assurance for ever. Then shall such Work as this be carried on with far greater Success, and the Inhabitants of the World more universally purg'd from their Filth and Uncleanness. Then *Mercy and Truth*, even amongst Men, as they have done with God, *shall meet together, and Righteousness and Peace embrace each other.* Our *unnatural Divisions and Contentions* shall then cease. The small Sparks of Love which are yet left, shall be blown up into a Flame, and that Fire of Wrath and Hatred, Malice and Envy, which never came from Heaven, shall be then extinguish'd. Love and Charity, so much recommended by the Gospel, and made such a distinguishing Badge of Christianity, shall be more than a Name in the midst of us; and if there shall then be any room for Differences of Opinions, all Persons shall see themselves oblig'd to the Exercise of **14 NO 63**

Zech. 3.
10.

To conclude, in that Day, as we are told in the Words immediately after the Text, *Ye shall call every Man his Neighbour under the Vine, and under the Fig-tree.* Men shall live in *Plenty and Safety*, in *Peace and Love*; the God of Peace and Love shall be with them, and the Name of the City shall be **J E H O V A H S H A M M A H**, *The Lord is there.*

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